

All Those Who Remained: The American-Led Guerillas in the Philippines, 1942-1945

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

All Those Who Remained: The American-Led Guerillas in the Philippines, 1942-1945, by MAJ Grant E. Jerry, 48 pages.

During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, American and Filipino soldiers behind enemy lines, and some civilians, formed guerilla groups to oppose the Japanese forces. The guerillas supported the eventual US liberation of the Philippines. The Luzon Guerilla Area Forces, the US Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon, and the East Central Luzon Guerilla Area forces directly supported the US liberation of the island of Luzon through all phases of the campaign. This monograph evaluates the effectiveness of these American-led guerilla groups in supporting the US liberation of Luzon. The analysis of guerilla efforts is in four areas: the development of intelligence to support the US landings on Luzon, the continued support of the Filipino civilian populace for a US return, operations behind Japanese lines to disrupt lines of communication and supply activities, and the integration of guerilla units into US formations during major combat operations during the re-conquest.

Table of Contents

Acronyms	v
Introduction	1
Literature Review	4
Luzon Guerilla Armed Forces	10
US Armed Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon	22
East Central Luzon Guerilla Area Forces.....	344
Conclusion.....	40
Bibliography	454

Acronyms

ECLGA	East Central Luzon Guerilla Area
LGAF	Luzon Guerilla Armed Forces
POW	Prisoner of War
SWPA	Headquarters, US Forces, Southwest Pacific Area
USAFIP-NL	US Armed Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon

Introduction

On May 6, 1942, the last major US Army units in the Philippines surrendered to the Japanese military at Corregidor. The Japanese had quickly defeated the ill-equipped and poorly trained US and Philippine Army units in the Philippines. After the US surrender at Corregidor, US Army Forces, Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) adjusted their plan for the defeat of Japanese forces in the Pacific. The SWPA needed to expel a Japanese force that successfully defeated US and Philippine forces and was prepared to defend the islands from a US invasion. The SWPA received limited resources as priority went to the European Theater of Operations. General Douglas MacArthur prepared to make the case for an invasion of the Philippines.¹ The alternative was to bypass the islands as US forces drove toward Japan. MacArthur believed that the US government had a moral obligation to liberate the Philippines as US forces moved toward Japan. The Filipino population was hostile toward the Japanese forces and supportive of US forces in the area.²

The favorable sentiment of the Filipino people towards US forces and the large group of American and Philippine Soldiers who remained in the Philippines provided an opportunity for the SWPA to support its campaign through unconventional means—the use of guerilla forces. The use of guerilla against Japanese forces would save US soldiers' lives.³ The development of combined American/Filipino guerilla forces was an important part of MacArthur's plan for the liberation of the Philippines. MacArthur believed the intelligence provided by guerillas was a

¹ Edwin P. Ramsey and Stephen J. Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander* (New York: Knightsbridge Publishing Co., 1990), 250.

² Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964), 197-198.

³ Ibid.

prerequisite for a US invasion of the Philippines.⁴ He directed his Chief of Intelligence, General Charles Willoughby, and the Allied Intelligence Bureau of SWPA to support and coordinate intelligence collection through the guerilla organizations in the Philippines.⁵ After the guerilla movement grew in size, MacArthur assigned Colonel Courtney Whitney to the Philippine Regional Section within the Allied Intelligence Bureau to manage guerilla efforts.⁶ The Philippine Regional Section was solely devoted to supporting the guerillas and intelligence agents in the Philippines. Before the US invasion, MacArthur and the SWPA built a support network that employed guerillas in support of the US campaign to liberate the Philippines. The eventual invasion of US forces caught Japanese forces in a trap between US forces and the guerilla forces in the Japanese rear areas.

From the onset of the Japanese occupation, US and Philippine resistance elements formed to oppose the Japanese occupation forces and support a potential liberation by US forces. American and Philippine soldiers who did not surrender to the Japanese, along with Philippine civilians, comprised the guerillas groups that resisted the Japanese occupation. The guerilla groups began as a localized effort on almost every island, including Luzon, Mindanao, Leyte, and Panay. US Army officers and non-commissioned officers who did not surrender with their units escaped into rural areas and led many of the guerilla groups. With a large portion of at-large US and Philippine soldiers on the island of Luzon, the American-led guerilla groups there were some of the most effective of all guerillas during the Japanese occupation. The guerilla groups in Luzon symbolized US resistance to Japanese domination in the Pacific. With American-led guerillas in Luzon, the Filipinos remained confident that US forces would return and liberate the Philippines.

⁴ Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, *MacArthur: 1941-1945* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1954), 209.

⁵ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 271.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

Once US forces arrived on Luzon, guerillas degraded the ability of Japanese forces to reinforce their defense as US forces established a foothold on the island. The contributions of the American-led guerillas groups on Luzon were critical to the US liberation of Luzon and successful campaign in the Philippines.

The American-led guerilla groups supported the US campaign on Luzon by activities from intelligence gathering for the invasion to operating as a supporting effort in major combat operations. This monograph evaluates guerilla efforts to support US forces in four areas that cover all the phases of the campaign to liberate Luzon. During the initial planning for the US invasion of Luzon, the guerillas provided critical intelligence on Japanese forces in Luzon. Guerilla groups sent reports back to SWPA based on information requests they received. The guerilla groups in Luzon maintained the support of the Filipino populace for US forces in the liberation of the Philippines. The survival of the American-led guerillas instilled confidence in the Filipinos that US forces would defeat the Japanese forces. A resistant Filipino populace not only created difficulties for the Japanese defenders but also provided a source of intelligence and material resources for the US forces upon their arrival. Once conventional US forces reached Luzon the ability of guerilla forces to interdict Japanese lines of communication and disrupt supply lines through raids and attacks further supported the US invasion. Through coordination and synchronizing their efforts, US forces and American-led guerillas forced the Japanese defenders to fight US conventional forces in the central Luzon plains while receiving consistent attacks from guerillas in northern and central Luzon in their rear areas. In the final phase of the campaign in Luzon, guerilla organizations formed provisional infantry units that supported major combat operations.

In 1942, the majority of US soldiers remaining in the Philippines were on the island of Luzon. Japanese counter-guerilla campaigns forced guerilla groups into hiding and resulted in the creation of a decentralized guerilla effort on Luzon. A large number of guerilla groups developed

on Luzon, yet only a few contributed greatly to the US liberation of the island. To evaluate the contribution to the US liberation of Luzon, it is best to focus on the larger guerilla groups that survived throughout the Japanese occupation. In addition, the American-led guerillas most effectively coordinated their operations with SWPA and integrated into major combat operations following the landing of US forces. The US Armed Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon (USAFIP-NL), the Luzon Guerilla Armed Forces (LGAF), and the East Central Luzon Guerilla Area forces (ECLGA) provide the best basis to evaluate the effort of American-led guerilla groups to support the US campaign to liberate Luzon. US Army officers led all three of these organizations throughout the Japanese occupation and they were the three largest American-led guerilla groups in Luzon. Each organization developed differently and contributed differently to the campaign. The investigation of the USAFIP-NL, LGAF, and the ECLGA offers a substantial evaluation of the efforts of American-led guerillas to support the US campaign in Luzon.

Literature Review

The historical narrative of American and Filipino resistance elements in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation highlights the bravery and fortitude of men fighting in extremely dangerous conditions. It also brings to light the clash of egos and evolution of historical accounts common to war. The historical narrative of the American-led resistance movement in the Philippines began with the personal accounts of the surviving guerilla leaders, such as Colonel Russell Volckmann, Colonel Donald Blackburn, Major Robert Lapham, Captain Ray Hunt, and Major Edwin Ramsey. These leaders created the generally accepted narrative by publishing their personal stories over the last seven decades. However, even these accounts lack documentation because the authors based the material on personal recollections of events rather than official records taken at the time. The historical accounts are only as strong as the writer's ability to properly recall and recount the events during the Japanese occupation and the follow-on fight to expel Japanese forces.

The nature of guerilla warfare is to blame for much of the lack of written records from the Philippine resistance. Guerilla formations operating behind enemy lines in occupied territory were always cautious of Japanese anti-guerilla efforts. The brutal Japanese campaign against guerilla fighters and those the Japanese suspected of aiding them required guerilla leaders to protect the identities and locations of anyone associated with their operations. Written records were a major security risk and many formations kept very little, if any, written records.⁷ In addition, the nature of guerilla warfare requires a force to maintain mobility to evade the enemy and places a high premium on scarce resources. Both of these constraints limited the ability of guerilla formations to maintain substantial records. Despite the lack of records written during the occupation and liberation of the Philippines, the gradual introduction of personal historical accounts coupled with military records from US Army, General Headquarters, SWPA improves understanding of the guerilla's contribution to Allied efforts to recapture the Philippines.

With his book, *We Remained*, Colonel Russell Volckmann was one of the first American guerilla leaders to publish a personal account of the Philippine resistance. Volckmann provides a detailed narrative of his activities as the commander of USAFIP-NL. Volckmann's story begins with his escape to northern Luzon, continues through the construction of a significant guerilla formation, and ends with the employment of his guerillas as conventional forces in support of Sixth Division, US Army. His account is significant because USAFIP-NL was the largest guerilla formation in Luzon. Consisting of 19,660 Americans and Filipinos organized across five regiments, USAFIP-NL was roughly the size of a US Army division.⁸ In addition, USAFIP-NL arguably had the greatest effect against the Japanese defenses. US Army commanders employed

⁷ Ray C. Hunt and Bernard Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 219.

⁸ R. W. Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1954), 180.

USAFIP-NL units as infantry regiments in support of the Sixth Army. Later, they fought as an independent division before ultimately forming the Second Division, Philippine Army.⁹

Volckmann released *We Remained* in 1954 and by default, his became the generally accepted story of the American-led Philippine resistance in Luzon. His ability to maintain detailed records of his organization and aggregate various guerilla formations under his command ensured the legacy of USAFIP-NL.¹⁰ Volckmann emphasized the necessity of a centralized military command structure and the use of sanctuary from the enemy to build forces and a support structure before undertaking offensive operations. He asserted that the Allies underused guerillas during World War II and said the United States should utilize guerilla warfare in its Cold War struggles.¹¹ Volckmann provided limited information on his interaction with other guerilla formations in Luzon except to mention several passing encounters he had as he moved into northern Luzon.

Captain Ray Hunt, US Army, was the next former guerilla leader on Luzon to publish his account. In *Behind Enemy Lines*, Hunt recounts his extraordinary journey from being a US Army Air Corps staff sergeant captured by Japanese forces to becoming a captain commanding the guerilla forces in Pangasinan Province. MacArthur approved Hunt's commission during the Japanese occupation. He sought to highlight the contributions of the LGAF to the US liberation of the Philippines. Hunt felt that Volckmann's USAFIP-NL received the majority of the credit for the success of American-led guerilla operations in Luzon despite the success of other guerilla

⁹ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 196, 218.

¹⁰ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines*, 217, 219.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 226, 237.

organizations that were relatively unnoticed.¹² He is critical of Volckmann's harsh methods, particularly the execution and torture of suspected collaborators by USAFIP-NL guerillas. Hunt attributes some of the praise bestowed upon USAFIP-NL to Volckmann's concern for its historical legacy.¹³ He is explicit in describing his various conflicts with Volckmann during the war, including Volckmann's attempt to place Hunt's organization under his command with the threat of court-martial.¹⁴ His conflicts with Volckmann could be a contributing factor to his criticism. While Hunt lauds the contributions of guerillas to the overall Allied effort to expel Japanese forces, he claims that the price of guerilla warfare to the Filipino people was too great. The division and animosity created between collaborators and guerilla supporters, combined with the mass reprisals and internal violence, made it more difficult for the Filipino people to recover from the war.

On the heels of Hunt's book, Major Robert Lapham and co-author Bernard Norling published *Lapham's Raiders*, Lapham's personal account of his time as the commander of LGAF. Lapham also sought to draw attention to LGAF's contribution to the Allied effort. He builds on the narrative of various guerilla organizations across Luzon operating independently, lacking a centralized command structure, and short of SWPA guidance. Lapham highlights the quarrels between himself and guerilla commanders such as Volckmann, Major Bernard Anderson, and Colonel Gyles Merrill over territory and command relationships.¹⁵ He asserts that a decentralized command structure functions better for guerilla operations. Lapham recognized the success of

¹² Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines*, 216.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162-164.

¹⁵ Robert Lapham and Bernand Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 113.

many guerilla groups, including those led by Major Bernard Anderson, Captain Ray Hunt, and Colonel Russell Volckmann toward the overall goal of liberating the Philippines.¹⁶

In keeping with the trend, Major Edwin Ramsey, along with co-author Stephen Rivele, wrote about Ramsey's experience as the commander of the ECLGA forces. He recounts his journey in the Philippines from being a scout to commanding over 40,000 personnel. Ramsey tells the story of his personal struggle to survive and the heroic exploits of the ECLGA.¹⁷ His account is mostly a biographical text, with little insight toward the overall guerilla effort. While these biographical accounts add to the primary sources and historical body of knowledge on guerilla operations in the Philippines, the premature death of many early guerilla leaders during the occupation leaves significant gaps in the narrative.

In *The Intrepid Guerillas of North Luzon*, Bernard Norling attempted to address the lack of literature on early guerilla leaders by extending the narrative to the Cagayan-Apayao Forces led by Major Ralph Praeger until his capture and execution by Japanese forces in 1943. After the Philippines fell to the Japanese in 1942, Praeger reorganized the soldiers remaining from his US Army unit into a wide-ranging guerilla organization.¹⁸ Ramsey also served with Praeger in the 26th Cavalry. Despite their early success and bravery in the face of Japanese efforts, the Cagayan-Apayao Forces would not survive the occupation. The remaining elements of the Cagayan-Apayao Forces, however, joined Volckmann's USAFIP-NL and performed superbly.¹⁹

¹⁶ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 115.

¹⁷ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander* (New York: Knightsbridge Publishing Co., 1990), 31, 301.

¹⁸ Bernand Norling, *The Intrepid Guerillas of North Luzon* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 223.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 227.

The addition of guerilla leaders' personal accounts broadened the historical perspective of the American-led guerilla movement in the Philippines.

With the recent successes of unconventional warfare and the use of indigenous forces during the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, there is renewed interest in American guerilla leaders during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. In *American Guerilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann*, Mike Guardia recounts the exploits of Volckmann and the USAFIP-NL. Guardia focuses on Volckmann's leadership and the role his forces played in the successful liberation of the Philippines. He credits Volckmann with developing the foundations for modern special operations and counter-insurgency doctrine and asserts that he is the true "Father" of US Army Special Forces.²⁰ Volckmann, who arguably accomplished more than any other guerilla leader in the Philippines, definitely received more acclaim than any of the other guerilla leaders. Mike Guardia also authored *Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn*, a biography of Donald Blackburn, Volckmann's deputy and a regimental commander in the USAFIP-NL. He follows Blackburn's career through his guerilla days in the Philippines to his service as Commander, Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, Studies and Observations Group and on to influential positions within Special Forces. Guardia highlights how Blackburn's experience organizing and leading Filipino guerillas shaped him and the development of US Army Special Forces.²¹

An additional primary source is the consolidated reports of General Charles A. Willoughby, General MacArthur's Director of Intelligence. Willoughby had the G-2 section at SWPA document all intelligence operations and activities in a 10-volume set. Volume I, *The*

²⁰ Mike Guardia, *American Guerilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2010), 177, 190.

²¹ Mike Guardia, *Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2011), 193-195.

Guerilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines, provides a rough breakdown and assessment of guerilla organizations in the Philippines, including maps of the assigned military districts and directives issued to the guerilla organizations.²² Volume II, *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines: Japanese Occupation*, shows correspondence between guerillas units and SWPA in the development of intelligence on Japanese forces and support to the guerillas.²³ The SWPA gathered the documents while in theater and consolidated them in 1948.

Historical accounts of the American-led guerillas in the Philippines are limited compared to that of other US Army units in the Pacific theater. The majority of the existing literature focuses mostly on singular exploits of individuals and their guerilla organizations. Most literature does not specifically look at each guerilla organization's effects on Japanese forces and eventual support of US forces in the recapture of the Philippines. Nevertheless, there is still sufficient information to analyze the efforts of American-led guerillas. This monograph will look at how successful the American-led guerilla elements were in disrupting Japanese forces, providing intelligence to enable US landings, and supporting the liberation of the Philippines.

Luzon Guerilla Armed Forces

The Republic of the Philippines is an island nation consisting of a chain of over 7,000 islands that stretch more than 1,200 miles from north to south. Governance over such a wide area made up of so many islands was difficult for the United States before World War II. After the surrender of US forces in the Philippines at Corregidor in 1942, the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces began occupying the Philippines and encountered the same challenges. Over the next three

²² Charles A. Willoughby, *The Guerilla Movement in the Philippines*, vol. I, Intelligence Series (General Headquarters: United States Army Forces, Pacific, 1 March 1948), ii.

²³ Charles A. Willoughby, *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation, Documentary Appendices*, vol. II, Intelligence Series (General Headquarters: United States Army Forces, Pacific, 10 June 1948), 1.

years, various armed guerilla formations made up of displaced American and Filipino soldiers and civilians waged an unconventional warfare campaign against the occupying Japanese forces. These guerilla groups supported the liberation of the Philippines by US forces.

Of the various Philippine islands, Luzon stands as the largest and most important, home to the capital in Manila and the largest population. Luzon was also home to the largest contingent of American forces before 1942 and Japanese forces during the occupation. During the Japanese occupation, various guerilla organizations formed in Luzon; some succumbed to Japanese counter-guerilla efforts over time while others survived to achieve great acclaim. Major Robert Lapham's LGAF emerged as one of the best-managed and most capable guerilla formations in Luzon. It was the third largest guerilla organization in Luzon and the fourth largest in the Philippines by the end of the occupation.²⁴ The LGAF supported the liberation of Luzon by US forces by providing intelligence and attacking Japanese forces throughout the island.

The development of the LGAF followed a path similar to that of other guerilla groups in the Philippines. Before the Japanese invasion, the US Army assigned several hundred officers to Philippine Army units as staff officers to advise, instruct, and train them. Many of these officers made up the nucleus and leadership of the guerilla organization. Before the surrender of US forces at Corregidor, Colonel Claude Thorp received direction from General MacArthur to infiltrate behind Japanese lines in northern Luzon to conduct guerilla warfare and gather intelligence. This was the first formal guidance to US military personnel regarding guerilla warfare in the Philippines. Lapham volunteered to accompany Thorp on this mission; Thorp had previously been Lapham's commanding officer. Thorp's original mission from the SWPA is

²⁴ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, vii.

important because it provided the military authorization for the development of many other guerilla organizations during the Japanese occupation.²⁵

Thorp established Camp Sanchez, a headquarters and base in the mountains near Clark Field. He began with a typical military staff structure, similar to that of a US Army battalion or regiment. Thorp initially assigned Lapham as the S-4, logistics officer. At that time, Clark Field was important to the Japanese war effort as a major airfield and a staging area for Japanese ground forces. From there, Thorp's guerillas moved into and hid in the mountains to observe Japanese movements. Thorp divided Luzon into sectors; these included Captain Ralph Praeger in northern Luzon, Charles Cushing in west central Luzon, Captain Ralph McGuire in western Luzon, Captain Jack Spies in southern Luzon, and Captain Joe Barker in east central Luzon.²⁶ Praeger, McGuire, Spies, and Barker were all US Army officers who had served in Thorp's US 26th Cavalry Regiment. Cushing was an American mining engineer who later received a commission as a second lieutenant. Thorp's initial design of a centralized structure quickly fell apart as Japanese forces captured and later executed guerilla leaders. The difficulty in maintaining communications across Luzon at this time made central command difficult. In turn, small guerilla organizations across Luzon grew independently into formidable fighting units.

Lapham disagreed with the initial approach of Thorp's organization. He felt that the mountains in the north did not allow for the mobility required for guerilla operations. Lapham believed that Japanese forces could easily isolate and surround guerilla camps in the mountains near populated areas. The remote mountain areas were of little value in recruiting and gathering intelligence based on the lack of inhabitants.²⁷ In addition, one of the major obstacles to building

²⁵ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

a guerilla force is feeding it and Lapham quickly realized that the lowlands provided the major share of food on the island. Lapham requested that Thorp permit him to strike out on his own to build a guerilla organization in the lowlands of central Luzon. Thorp allowed him to depart along with any others willing to go. Initially starting with only two men, Sergeant Albert Short, and a young Philippine Army sergeant, Esteban Lumyeb, he built a guerilla force of over 10,000 men.²⁸

Like most other American guerillas, Lapham began a journey through Luzon before settling in one area. He set up his base in Umingan, where Filipino locals approached him and offered to serve in the guerilla resistance.²⁹ These opportunities were not rare, as many Filipino people, especially in rural areas, remained loyal to the Americans and were willing to support a resistance led by Americans. Lapham established himself and recruited across the central lowlands of Luzon. From there, he built the first elements of the LGAF, Squadron 111 in Umingan and Squadron 300 in Lupao.³⁰ With an abundance of volunteers, Lapham looked to recruit current and former local officials and others with some military experience. One of their first military operations was a raid based on a local tip that half a dozen so-called soldiers were encamped in a local barrio. Lapham and his men surrounded the soldiers only to find they were Philippine Army soldiers who had not yet surrendered. They claimed to be in search of a guerilla organization to join. The soldiers enlisted in the LGAF and served throughout the occupation.³¹ The LGAF continued to grow in size as Lapham recruited local Filipino civilians and former Philippine soldiers.

²⁸ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

The LGAF was able to survive and grow due to the support of the local population and influence with the local public officials. Lapham gave direct orders to his units to protect the local populace from cruel treatment at the hands of criminals, bandits, and Japanese forces.³² Looting and terrorizing the local population eroded trust with the populace and threatened a crucial support base. The LGAF and populace had trouble at times with local officials. As word spread of the LGAF, a pro-Japanese mayor began to threaten his people in order to gain information on the guerillas. Shortly after Lapham decided to eliminate the mayor, one of his most trusted Filipino officers presented him with the mayor's severed head.³³ The guerillas struck a balance between the support and admiration of the local populace and an underlying fear that squashed potential collaborators and spies.

The wide array of guerilla organizations across Luzon created friction as those groups grew in size and territory by 1944. Despite efforts by Thorp, and later by Lieutenant Colonel Moses and Noble in northern Luzon, the guerilla groups evolved into independent regional commands over specific provinces on Luzon. Moses, Noble, and their successor in northern Luzon, Colonel Russell Volckmann, attempted to bring Lapham's LGAF under their command and failed. Lapham rebuffed their attempts and ignored further efforts to bring the LGAF under another guerilla command. He believed that the LGAF operated best as an independent group and he maintained his independent command throughout, reporting only to the SWPA. He requested clarification from SWPA via radio on the command structure in Luzon. Though he received no response, SWPA's practice of interacting directly with guerilla commanders in their districts seemed to provide tacit approval of his status as an independent commander. However, this did not eliminate the issues of overlapping jurisdiction between guerilla commanders.

³² Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 42.

³³ *Ibid.*, 33.

The lack of communication between guerilla groups and a decentralized command structure created a situation where multiple guerilla units claimed control over the same area. This problem was evident in Nueva Vizcaya and Tayabas provinces, which fell under Lapham and the LGAF, but Volckmann claimed as part of the USAFIP-NL.³⁴ SWPA reports dated October 1944 also identified Lapham's guerillas both under Volckmann's USFIP-NL and as an independent organization in central Luzon.³⁵ Despite the quarrels over territories, the independent guerilla commands supported each other in mission essential requirements. As the LGAF began to receive supplies from SWPA via US Navy submarines in Baler Bay, Lapham coordinated for Volckmann and USFAIP-NL to receive a radio transmitter. He also relayed their supply requests and intelligence reports. Lapham continued to pass supplies to USAFIP-NL until Volckmann coordinated for a rendezvous with submarines in his district.³⁶ The American-led guerilla organizations had disputes over territorial boundaries, but in their limited interaction, they supported each other.

Even before establishing consistent contact with SWPA, Lapham provided clear guidance and direction for the guerillas of LGAF. He narrowed the mission of LGAF to three components: collect information (to aid US liberation), reassure the Filipino people of a US return, and prepare for offensive operations against Japanese forces.³⁷ Direction from SWPA clearly defined the guerilla's role in gathering intelligence regarding Japanese forces, the local populace, and

³⁴ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 118-119.

³⁵ Willoughby, *The Guerilla Movement in the Philippines*, 44.

³⁶ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 159.

³⁷ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 93.

anything that could hinder a US operation to liberate the islands.³⁸ Despite the clear direction to limit their operations to intelligence gathering, the guerillas conducted limited raids and ambushes. As the Japanese captured early guerilla leaders such as Thorp, Praeger, Moses, and Noble, Lapham learned the danger of initiating offensive operations too early and independent of US landings on Luzon. Such early attempts at ambushes and attacks on Japanese forces brought a swift response from Japanese forces. None of the initial leaders of Thorp's organization would survive the occupation.³⁹ Not only was premature action a threat to the guerilla organization itself, it also threatened the support base within the local populace that enabled the LGAF to survive. The fear of Japanese reprisals against local civilians convinced Lapham and the LGAF to delay offensive action until US forces approached Luzon.⁴⁰

Filipino faith that US forces would return was critical to the survival and success of the guerilla movement. Without confidence in a US return, the Filipino people had no long-term motivation to support the guerillas. Filipinos believed that the United States would return and expel the Japanese forces from the Philippines. The persistent focus on maintaining public confidence in a US return was evident as the LGAF received, via submarine, US propaganda material such as commodities emblazoned with MacArthur's famous line, "I shall return."⁴¹ MacArthur directed the LGAF on November 25, 1944, to tell the Filipinos that he expected a loyal response from all Filipino people.⁴² Lapham admits that this messaging resonated with the

³⁸ Willoughby, *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation*, 28.

³⁹ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 36.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴¹ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines*, 157.

⁴² Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 163.

Filipino people, but the everyday presence and interaction with the local populace by the guerillas went even further to bolster Filipino confidence in a US return.⁴³ If Japanese forces could not effectively prevent guerillas from operating in plain sight, they surely could not stop the impending US military's return.

The establishment of radio communication with SWPA in Australia was a major turning point in the guerilla movement. Up until that point, the LGAF had little direct impact on the preparations for the liberation of the Philippines. They were unable to effectively relay information about Japanese forces and coordinate their efforts to support US landings on Luzon. All this changed when Captain Robert Ball, an intelligence officer for the SWPA, landed in Baler Bay with a sailboat containing a radio and other food and supplies.⁴⁴ While the food and supplies was a welcome boost to morale, the radio set the stage for the LGAF to begin preparation for US landings on Luzon. Lapham began relaying the massive stockpile of information they gathered over the last two years. With a runner network spread across Luzon, the LGAF relayed information and requests from the other guerilla organizations, such as Volckmann's USAFIP-NL.⁴⁵ By July 1944, all the American-led guerilla organizations in Luzon had radios and began receiving supplies via submarine.⁴⁶

Lapham consolidated intelligence reports from his area commanders, Captain Harry McKenzie in Nueva Ecija, Captain Al Hendrickson in Tarlac, and Captain Ray Hunt in Pangasinan, and passed them to SWPA. In turn, SWPA relayed detailed intelligence requests

⁴³ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 218.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴⁵ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 157.

⁴⁶ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 148.

back to LGAF. The LGAF provided reports back almost daily leading up to the landings.⁴⁷ The LGAF units provided detailed information on enemy positions and potential high value targets for Allied bombing raids. Examples included reports of “enemy heavy artillery emplaced 400 meters north of the church steeple” or “400 drums of gasoline and empty tanks with a capacity of 50,000 gallons at Aguilar.”⁴⁸ Reports poured in on Japanese aircraft locations at airfields, movement of US internees from Prisoner of War (POW) camps, and size and disposition of Japanese forces. The guerillas also provided battle damage assessments following Allied bombing raids. The LGAF provided details such as, “hangar damaged at Clark Field, gasoline dumps missed on the south side of bridge over Pasig and Pateros river junction, and three planes destroyed at Lingayen Field.”⁴⁹ The LGAF enabled the SWPA to begin affecting the Japanese forces on Luzon before the landing of US forces.

As the SWPA continued planning for the liberation of Luzon and looked for a location to land US forces, Hunt’s element of the LGAF in Pangasinan province provided a detailed layout of the Japanese defenses and installations at San Fernando, La Union, north of Lingayen Gulf on the west coast of Luzon. This information led SWPA to shift the landings to the south end of Lingayen Gulf despite the unfavorable tides in the area. The landings in the south end of Lingayen Gulf were successful and relatively unopposed except for a few Japanese kamikaze attacks. The landings in Lingayen Gulf surprised the Japanese forces and possibly saved American lives when compared to an opposed landing to the north.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Willoughby, *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines*, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham’s Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 164-165.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵⁰ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines*, 168.

Initially, the LGAF received guidance from SWPA to prepare for a campaign of sabotage and attacks aimed at Japanese lines of communication, minor garrisons, supply areas, and mobility assets. On January 4, 1945, LGAF received the order to begin attacks against Japanese forces and installations in full force to set conditions for the planned landings in Lingayen Gulf on January 9. In the five weeks leading up to January 4, as it waited for the right moment to strike, the LGAF was only involved in three skirmishes with Japanese forces.⁵¹ In the period from January 4 to the landings on January 9, the LGAF fought in forty-eight separate engagements with Japanese forces, including fourteen deliberate assaults on Japanese garrisons, thirteen ambushes of Japanese vehicles, and five attacks on Japanese patrols. LGAF guerillas derailed three trains and killed 675 Japanese soldiers during this period.⁵² The Japanese 14th Army was unable to move large amounts of supplies to its defensive positions due to the disruption caused by guerilla attacks. As the Japanese forces began to prepare for defensive operations against a US advance into north Luzon, they resorted to forced labor, requiring Filipino locals to carry their equipment on their backs over arduous terrain.⁵³ The use of Filipinos as forced labor reinforced the hatred for the Japanese among the Filipino people and maintained support for the guerillas through the US liberation of the Philippines.

Even after the successful US landings on Luzon on January 9, 1945, the LGAF continued to disrupt Japanese forces and contribute to the liberation of the Philippines. Once the US Sixth Army landed on Luzon, the LGAF and their Filipino supporters became even bolder in their attacks against Japanese forces. In the month following the landings, the LGAF fought 61 engagements with Japanese forces including twenty-five attacks on Japanese patrols and eight

⁵¹ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 160.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 174.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

assaults on Japanese garrisons. LGAF guerilla units seized the towns of Aguilar and Urbiztondo along the Agno River and Malasiqui to the north and took part in the siege at Muñoz, the raid on Cabanatuan POW camp, and three following raids.⁵⁴ The raid on the POW camp highlighted the LGAF's direct contribution to the effort to liberate Luzon.

LGAF guerillas consistently reported on the US POWs held at Cabanatuan before the US landings in Lingayen Gulf. Lapham repeatedly requested permission from SWPA to conduct a rescue operation. He feared that Japanese forces might execute US POWs at any time and warned that the POWs' health was quickly deteriorating. SWPA denied his request due to the inability of the guerillas to return the prisoners to a friendly area.⁵⁵ The LGAF did not have the facilities to care for the prisoners and the US Navy could not evacuate that many prisoners via submarine. They wisely delayed the rescue operation until US ground forces could support it.

Upon linking up with General Walter Krueger, Commander, US Sixth Army, Lapham again requested to rescue the prisoners at the Cabanatuan camp. Krueger assigned his G-2, Colonel Gordon White, to develop a plan to rescue the prisoners at Cabanatuan and he assigned Lieutenant Colonel Henry Mucci, 6th Ranger Battalion, to lead the operation. Lapham assigned Juan Pajota and his ninety-one guerillas along with Eduardo Joson and his seventy-five guerillas to the operation. Krueger did not allow Lapham to take part in the raid because of the high risk and his important role as the LGAF commander. The guerillas provided the blocking positions to the north and the south of the camp to prevent a Japanese battalion from reinforcing the guards at Cabanatuan. Guerillas also supported the Alamo Scouts, a long-range reconnaissance unit in the US Sixth Army, with reconnaissance of the camp.⁵⁶ The raid at Cabanatuan highlighted the

⁵⁴ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 176.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

effectiveness of a combined effort between US forces and guerilla forces. Pajota's guerillas fought a delaying action against heavy Japanese resistance as the Rangers evacuated the prisoners. In total, the force of guerillas and Rangers freed 513 prisoners and killed 225 Japanese guards.⁵⁷

The Cabantuan raid was a success in more ways than just the recovery of US prisoners. It highlighted the high value placed on recovering US soldiers and civilians by the US government. The willingness of the US government to go to such lengths to recover its personnel stood in great contrast to that of Japanese forces as they showed little regard for the life of Filipino civilians and US personnel.⁵⁸ Filipinos witnessed the disparity in how the occupying Japanese treated them compared to the Americans. The recognition of this difference between the occupying Japanese forces and the Americans further cemented the bond between the Filipinos and their American liberators. American guerilla leaders, such as Lapham and Hunt, were able to translate this advantage with the Filipino people into tangible support in the form of personnel, intelligence, logistics, and sanctuary.

By June 1944, the LGAF began transformation from a guerilla element of 10,000-20,000 men into a Philippine infantry regiment fighting under the command of the US Army's 32nd Infantry Division, part of the US Sixth Army. US officers currently serving remained in the LGAF to provide leadership. The organization and discipline of the LGAF allowed for a quick transition to conventional military operations as they fought alongside 32nd Infantry Division and helped eject the Japanese forces from entrenched defensive positions through the central corridor

⁵⁷ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 180.

⁵⁸ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerilla in the Philippines*, 197-198.

of Luzon.⁵⁹ After years of waiting for their opportunity, the LGAF guerillas fought with great conviction, earning the praise of US military officers and contributing greatly to the liberation of the Philippines.

By maintaining Filipino confidence in and support for a US military liberation of the Philippines and providing critical intelligence on Japanese forces throughout Luzon, the LGAF set the conditions for the successful liberation of Luzon. As the US Sixth Army landed at Lingayen Gulf and moved south, the LGAF attacked Japanese outposts and supply lines, effectively limiting their mobility and forcing the Japanese to defend against a threat within their own lines. The LGAF culminated their operations as a supporting element of the US Sixth Army, providing additional combat power and proving themselves during major combat operations in the central corridor and at Cabanatuan. The efforts of the LGAF directly supported the SWPA operations to liberate the Philippines and defeat the Japanese forces on Luzon.

US Armed Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon

The Cordillera Central and Sierra Madre mountain ranges separated by the lush Cagayan valley dominate the northern region of Luzon. Dense tropical rainforests and rough mountainous terrain made this area both inhospitable to occupying forces and a safe haven for guerilla fighters. Colonel Russell Volckmann and his partner Lieutenant Colonel Donald Blackburn used this sanctuary to build the largest guerilla organization on Luzon during the Japanese occupation, the USAFIP-NL. From the highlands of northern Luzon, they built a guerilla organization that gathered intelligence and conducted sabotage attacks and raids against Japanese forces in support of the invasion by US forces in January 1945. However, USAFIP-NL's greatest contribution may be its service as a division-sized fighting element comprised of five infantry regiments following

⁵⁹ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 185-186.

the US landings. The USAFIP-NL fought alongside and in support of the US Sixth Army as the Sixth Army attacked and broke Japanese General Yamashita's defense in northern Luzon.

Volckmann inherited the shell of a guerilla organization in northern Luzon from Colonel Moses and Noble after their capture. Volckmann and his partner, Blackburn, united various independent guerilla organizations across northern Luzon and expanded their organization in other areas. The USAFIP-NL expanded and was the largest guerilla formation on Luzon by the time US forces landed at Lingayen Gulf. Volckmann then transitioned the USAFIP-NL into a division-sized Philippine infantry unit organized under the US Sixth Army. The Battle of Bessang Pass was the crowning achievement of the USAFIP-NL in the liberation of the Philippines. In this fight, USAFIP-NL highlighted its contribution to the conventional fighting during the US liberation of Luzon.

The roots of the USAFIP-NL began during the final hours of the US forces defense at Bataan where Volckmann and Blackburn were both serving in the 11th US Infantry Regiment. They gained approval from their command to escape north through the Japanese lines in hopes of linking up with other guerilla units forming from US and Filipino soldiers cut off during the Japanese drive south.⁶⁰ At this time, General Douglas MacArthur instructed Colonel Claude Thorp to remain behind Japanese lines to carry out a guerilla war against the occupying Japanese forces.⁶¹ Volckmann and Blackburn set out from Bataan and traveled north in search of existing guerilla formations. Upon reaching Thorp's camp, Volckmann and Blackburn decided not to join his organization but to continue farther into northern Luzon. Blackburn recounts that Thorp had

⁶⁰ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 58.

⁶¹ Guardia, *Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn*, 59.

rejected Volckmann and Blackburn; he saw himself as the sole guerilla leader.⁶² In his memoirs, Volckmann himself did not detail the reason for departing.

As Volckmann and Blackburn continued north they linked up with Major Robert Lapham, US Army, and the LGAF and received information on another guerilla organization in northern Luzon led by US Army Lieutenant Colonels Martin Moses and Arthur Noble, who had escaped from Bataan prior to the US surrender.⁶³ Blackburn regarded Lapham's LGAF as the best-organized guerilla formation in central Luzon.⁶⁴ Volckmann assessed that the mountainous terrain in northern Luzon was the best place to form their guerilla organization and most importantly provided the best chance of survival. Volckmann's selection of the mountains as his base was in contrast to Lapham's approach to building his guerilla organization in central Luzon.

Through their trek north from Bataan to northern Luzon, Volckmann and Blackburn encountered most of the significant guerilla formations in Luzon at the time. Volckmann designed his own approach to guerilla warfare and the plan for his guerilla organization based on their interaction with these others guerilla organizations. He saw the necessity of additional guerilla organizations outside of Thorp's command and witnessed the benefits of Lapham's organization while recognizing the importance of sanctuary in the mountains of northern Luzon. Additionally, Volckmann gained situational awareness of the various guerilla organizations across Luzon.⁶⁵ As those guerilla organizations grew, Volckmann recognized the importance of not sabotaging the efforts of other guerilla groups.

⁶² Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 60.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁶⁴ Guardia, *American Guerilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann*, 65.

⁶⁵ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 80.

During the trek into northern Luzon, Volckmann witnessed the willingness of the local Filipino people to take in and provide support to American guerillas, even at great risk to their own personal safety. As Volckmann and Blackburn traveled through the central Luzon plain into the northern mountains, rural families saved their lives on multiple occasions by providing refuge from Japanese patrols as well as life-saving food and medical care.⁶⁶ One Filipino family, the Guerros, cared for Volckmann and Blackburn for two months, nursing them both back to health after both had fallen victim to dysentery and malnutrition. The Guerros, with support from a local Filipino businessman, Mr. Demson, went to great lengths to ensure Volckmann and Blackburn's safety, even moving them farther into the jungle to evade Japanese detection.⁶⁷ Volckmann quickly identified the opportunity to build an extensive support network for a future guerilla organization. He also recognized the importance of protecting the populace from not only Japanese reprisals and atrocities, but also from rogue guerilla elements who used the guerilla cause as an excuse to rob and pillage local villagers. As quickly as Volckmann acquired support through the Filipino populace, attacks and reprisals could quickly erode any support for the guerillas and even encourage Japanese collaborators. The continued support of local Filipinos allowed Volckmann and Blackburn to reach Moses' and Noble's camp in northern Luzon.

Volckmann and Blackburn arrived in the camp of Moses and Noble in September 1942. They found a mix of American and Filipino guerillas lacking organization and direction. Upon arrival, Volckmann confirmed his belief that northern Luzon was the best-suited region for an American-led guerilla campaign.⁶⁸ The mountains of northern Luzon provided more than a physical sanctuary and early warning from Japanese patrols due to restrictive terrain; it was also

⁶⁶ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

less prone to the disease and malaria of the humid lowlands. This was a serious consideration for American officers, like Volckmann and Blackburn, who suffered greatly from malaria and dysentery on their movement to northern Luzon. Shortly after their arrival, Moses, the senior ranking US officer in Luzon, assumed command of all guerillas in northern Luzon as the USAFIP-NL. Volckmann coordinated the efforts of three guerilla commands in Benquet province, in north central Luzon, with Blackburn as his deputy. Moses was eager to begin offensive operations against the occupying Japanese forces.⁶⁹

In October 1942, the USAFIP-NL began offensive operations against Japanese garrisons across northern Luzon. While attacks on Japanese garrison at Sanhiglo and Balatoc were successful, others, such as the raid on the Japanese garrison at the Igoten mine, failed.⁷⁰ More importantly, the USFIP-NL did not prepare for the Japanese response to guerilla actions. The Japanese forces launched a yearlong, major campaign to locate and destroy all guerillas in northern Luzon.⁷¹ Japanese forces drove Volckmann out of his headquarters at the Lukod sawmill and chased Moses out of his headquarters at Bobok. Japanese soldiers knew Volckmann and Blackburn by name, questioning Filipino locals directly about the location of both guerilla leaders. Japanese counter guerilla efforts forced Volckmann and the USFIP-NL to retreat into mountains to alternate locations and the organization was in disarray.⁷²

The USAFIP-NL had been premature in conducting offensive operations directly against Japanese forces. They were unable to withstand the Japanese response. The Japanese forces

⁶⁹ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 88.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

⁷¹ Guardia, *Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn*, 75.

⁷² Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 92.

quickly found the locations and identities of guerillas and their supporters through pressure on the local populace and a network of collaborators. The USAFIP-NL did not have an intelligence network within northern Luzon capable of rooting out collaborators and providing ample early warning of Japanese movements. They could not protect the local population from Japanese reprisals. Ultimately, the local populace caved to Japanese pressure and provided information on the guerillas as the Japanese forces increased their brutal methods. The initial offensive operations of the USAFIP-NL were premature in that the intelligence infrastructure was not in place to protect their organization and their supporters. The Japanese forces made counter-guerilla operations the priority in northern Luzon.

Volckmann refocused his efforts following the Japanese counter-guerilla campaign. He made his priority developing a wide network of informants and eliminating any collaborators.⁷³ Attacks and raids against the Japanese forces came after the USAFIP-NL achieved a suitable level of operational security; a guerilla must survive first to be effective. Volckmann and Blackburn moved their operations north to Ifugao province and began rebuild the USAFIP-NL.⁷⁴

From Ifugao, Volckmann developed a network of agents across northern Luzon. As the reorganization took place, Volckmann assumed command of the organization when the Japanese captured and executed Moses and Noble. He organized the USAFIP-NL into five districts aligned with the Philippine provinces.⁷⁵ A system of runners, message centers, and routes provided a reliable communications network to coordinate the efforts of the USAFIP-NL. The USAFIP-NL used message centers established on three east-west and three north-south routes that effectively

⁷³ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 95.

⁷⁴ Guardia, *Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn*, 81.

⁷⁵ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 119.

linked all units together.⁷⁶ This infrastructure supported the collection and reporting of intelligence across northern Luzon. The SWPA reaffirmed the mission of the USAFIP-NL with an early radio message from MacArthur that read, “General policy of USFIP in the Philippines is to limit hostilities and contact with the enemy to the minimum amount necessary for safety. Concentrate on perfecting organization and on developing of intelligence net. Therefore, until ammunition and supplies can be sent, your present mission as intelligence units can be currently of utmost value. Nothing is surer than our ultimate victory.”⁷⁷

Between the guidance from MacArthur and US Army, General Headquarters SWPA and extensive Japanese counter-guerilla efforts, Volckmann made intelligence gathering and building the infrastructure for the USAFIP-NL the priority. He used civilian agents to gather intelligence and identify collaborators within the populace. It was important to maintain a degree of separation from the civilian informants and the guerilla fighters to gain a degree of operational security for the guerilla organization. The civilian agents reported to their civilian handlers and they reported directly to the district commander. The guerilla fighters minimized their exposure to the local populace to prevent identification by Japanese forces. USAFIP-NL counterintelligence efforts focused on the Japanese and newly established Filipino constabulary units tasked to root out resistance elements within northern Luzon. USAFIP-NL’s civilian agents infiltrated the Filipino constabulary units and identified spies and collaborators. The USAFIP-NL eliminated collaborators and spies who assisted the Japanese forces. Its actions sent a clear message that collaborators were not safe in USAFIP-NL districts. Many Filipino locals who were previously undecided began to support the resistance movement. The USAFIP-NL denied the Japanese occupying forces the assistance of collaborators and received early warning of Japanese actions

⁷⁶ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 129.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

through their network of spies and informants.⁷⁸ The intelligence network provided a safety net for the USAFIP-NL to increase the size and structure of its guerilla units while closely monitoring and reporting on Japanese forces. The USAFIP-NL maintained and built up its organization waiting for the appropriate moment to strike at the Japanese forces in support of the US Army's liberation of Luzon.

In addition to protecting the guerilla organization, intelligence gathered by the USAFIP-NL was critical to SWPA's planning for the liberation of the Philippines. Guerillas in northern Luzon provided the greatest amount of intelligence available to SWPA as Luzon had the greatest concentration of Japanese forces. In July 1942, USAFIP-NL established consistent contact with SWPA by passing written messages through Major Robert Lapham and the LGAF in central Luzon. By August, the USAFIP-NL had received a radio set and communicated directly with SWPA via radio.⁷⁹ This allowed the USAFIP-NL to send intelligence reports that supported the planning for the liberation of Luzon. At the peak of its operations, roughly January 1945, the SWPA received 3,700 radio messages that month from guerillas in the Philippines. The diversity and wide range of guerilla reports aided SWPA in planning. The SWPA was able to vet reports based on the overlapping guerilla intelligence networks.⁸⁰

Volckmann received additional guidance from SWPA on operations and supporting the US landings. SWPA directed the USAFIP-NL to destroy enemy lines of communication, supply dumps, trucks, and command posts, to delay enemy troop movements, and to prevent Japanese

⁷⁸ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 126.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁰ Willoughby and Chamberlain, *MacArthur: 1941-1945*, 211, 215.

forces from procuring food and construction materials.⁸¹ SWPA directed the USFIP-NL to prepare to conduct these operations upon order from SWPA. The October 20, 1944, successful US landings at Leyte Island, combined with the message from MacArthur that “I have returned,”⁸² emboldened the local resistance to Japanese forces and support for the guerillas. The guerillas spread MacArthur’s message with printed material received from SWPA and what they could print locally.

With a surge of local support, Volckmann began pre-invasion operations to build confidence in his forces before launching full-scale attacks against Japanese forces. Volckmann used raids on Japanese supply depots and convoys to increase the capability of the USAFIP-NL. The 121st Infantry Regiment of the USFIP-NL destroyed 60,000 liters of fuel near Lingayen and the 66th Regiment destroyed the Agno River hydroelectric power plant.⁸³ These operations set the stage for operations in support of the US landings on Luzon. General MacArthur thought of the guerillas as a “ghost army” of over 182,000 soldiers relaying information back to SWPA and awaiting the return of US forces to begin major attacks on Japanese forces.⁸⁴ MacArthur addressed his messages “to my commanders in the Philippines” and purposely sent them unencrypted as a psychological message to the Japanese commanders of the great threat lurking in their rear area.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 159.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 175.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸⁴ William B. Breuer, *MacArthur’s Undercover War: Spies, Saboteurs, Guerillas, and Secret Missions* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1995), 180.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

In late December 1944, the USAFIP-NL received the message they waited for so long from SWPA. Four days before the US landings, USAFIP-NL would begin full-scale offensive operations against Japanese forces. SWPA instructed them to destroy bridges, culverts, and defiles between Laoag, Ilocos Norte and Tagudin, Ilocos Sur and between Baquio and Bontoc. Their next priority would be the destruction of lines of communication along the Balete Pass, including the destruction of wire communication lines, fuel and ammunition sites, supply depots, and concealed aircraft. The SWPA instructed the USAFIP-NL to encourage the Filipino people to attack the Japanese occupiers.⁸⁶ SWPA directed the actions of USAFIP-NL in concert with the US landings in Lingayen Gulf with detailed instructions on targets for guerilla operations.

Each USAFIP-NL regiment across northern Luzon began offensive operations against Japanese forces in their area. Volckmann met General Krueger at Lingayen Gulf and received his orders, as USFIP-NL would now operate under Krueger's Sixth Army.⁸⁷ SWPA tasked Krueger's Sixth Army to defeat Yamashita's defenses and clear Luzon of Japanese forces. Krueger directed the USAFIP-NL to continue to ambush Japanese forces, seize ammunition and supply sites, and sever ground lines of communication as Japanese forces attempted to withdraw or advance. He instructed USAFIP-NL units to make contact with US corps commanders in their area and provide critical information on Japanese forces.⁸⁸

The USAFIP-NL achieved great effects on Japanese forces in their areas of operations. The 66th Regiment of USAFIP-NL, assigned to the Baquio area, destroyed bridges and Japanese vehicles and killed over 4,000 Japanese soldiers in three months of fighting. They reduced the

⁸⁶ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 180.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁸⁸ Walter Krueger, *From Nippon to Down Under: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: Combat Forces, 1953), 243.

ability of Japanese forces to reinforce and resupply their defenses.⁸⁹ Yamashita was unable to move forces from Manila to the defensive lines in northern Luzon because of the success of guerilla operations in disrupting ground lines of communications.⁹⁰ The 121st Regiment of the USAFIP-NL destroyed the Japanese garrison in southern Ilocos Sur and northern La Union provinces. They later captured the port of San Fernando, opening one of the best ports in northern Luzon for US forces.⁹¹ The capture of San Fernando allowed the Sixth Army's 33rd Division and 121st Regiment to continue the attack and forced the Japanese forces to withdraw.⁹²

On February 27, 1945, the 15th Regiment of the USAFIP-NL captured the Japanese airfield at Gabu. Gabu gave the US forces an operational airfield 150 miles behind enemy lines. US forces used Gabu as an emergency airfield to recover the crews from crippled bombers after bombing runs over northern Luzon.⁹³ The coordinated efforts of the USAFIP-NL regiments across northern Luzon supported the initial operations of US forces in Luzon through the seizure of key infrastructure and disruption of Japanese mobility and supply operations.

The plan to break Yamashita's defense in northern Luzon required Krueger's Sixth Army to seize the Balete Pass, the gateway to the critical Cagayan Valley and the Bontoc region. Cut off from the Cagayan Valley, the Japanese forces would be unable to acquire food and essential supplies. The plan required pressure on the Japanese defense from all sides. Sixth Army had all

⁸⁹ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 196-197.

⁹⁰ Krueger, *From Nippon to Down Under: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II*, 327.

⁹¹ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 199-200.

⁹² Krueger, *From Nippon to Down Under: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II*, 299.

⁹³ Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in the Philippines*, 200-201.

three divisions from I Corps and the USAFIP-NL made up the fourth division in their plan to break the Japanese defense. The 25th Infantry Division attacked from the south along Highway 5 while the 32nd Infantry Division attacked west on the Villa Verde trail. The 33rd Infantry Division attacked Japanese forces around Baquio and the USAFIP-NL attacked Japanese Forces to the north to seize Bontoc.⁹⁴

The USAFIP-NL, organized as a combined arms division including the 15th, 66th, and 121st Regiments supported by two field artillery battalions, drove along Highway 4 toward Bontoc. As the USAFIP-NL advanced toward their intermediate objective, the town of Cervantes, they met stiff resistance from the Japanese 19th Division at Bessang Pass. The Japanese forces established dominant positions in the rough terrain of the Bessang Pass. After weeks of fierce fighting, the USFIP-NL cleared the Pass advancing on Cervantes and then Bontoc. USAFIP-NL's success in the Bessang Pass and follow-on capture of Cervantes and Bontoc opened a third major front against Yamashita's defense in northern Luzon. USAFIP-NL pinned down the Japanese 19th Division in the north preventing it from reinforcing Japanese efforts south in Baquio and at the Balete Pass. The victory in Bontoc severed Japanese forces from supplies in the Cagayan Valley; and with the I Corps seizure of Baquio and the Balete Pass, Japanese forces were decisively defeated on Luzon.

The USFIP-NL was a major contributor to the Sixth Army campaign on Luzon. The Japanese forces suffered nearly 10,000 dead in northwest Luzon against the USAFIP-NL, while the USAFIP-NL sustained 900 killed, 2,360 wounded, and 110 missing from January 9, 1945, to June 15, 1945.⁹⁵ General Krueger described the USAFIP-NL's contributions by stating, the

⁹⁴ Krueger, *From Nippon to Down Under: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II*, 299-300.

⁹⁵ Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1963), 556.

“gallant Philippine forces, despite tremendous difficulties and the very limited means at their disposal, rendered invaluable support to our operations; their accomplishments are worthy of high praise.”⁹⁶ General MacArthur claimed that the USAFIP-NL accomplished the mission of a front line division in northern Luzon.⁹⁷

The USAFIP-NL was the not only the largest and most effective guerilla organization in Luzon, it was also a combat division that successfully accomplished the tasks of a US division in the Luzon campaign. The USAFIP-NL was a critical part of the Sixth Army campaign in northern Luzon in some of the most vicious and toughest fighting in the southwest Pacific theater.⁹⁸ In addition to combat operations, the intelligence provided by the USAFIP-NL supported the planning and initial entry of US forces on Luzon through the defeat of Japanese Forces on Luzon. Colonel Volckmann’s ability to organize and build such a guerilla force helped maintain Filipino support for and confidence in the eventual liberation of the Philippines by US forces. The USAFIP-NL was a critical component of the US campaign in Luzon.

East Central Luzon Guerilla Area Forces

The ECLGA forces began when US soldiers, cut off during the Japanese advance across Luzon in 1942, combined with Filipino soldiers and civilians resisting the Japanese occupation. Initially led by Captain Joe Barker, Major Edwin Ramsey commanded the ECLGA during most of the Japanese occupation of Luzon. The ECLGA provided critical intelligence to the SWPA on Japanese forces in the central plains of Luzon. Ramsey built a widespread organization that maintained Filipino support and confidence in the eventual US liberation of Luzon. The ECLGA

⁹⁶ Krueger, *From Nippon to Down Under: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II*, 319-320.

⁹⁷ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 241.

⁹⁸ Willoughby and Chamberlain, *MacArthur: 1941-1945*, 271.

supported the impending US landings in Lingayen Gulf through a campaign of raids and attacks in Japanese rear areas. ECLGA raids and attacks on Japanese forces and infrastructure limited the ability of Japanese forces to reinforce their defensive line following the US landings and their major defensive in northern Luzon. Following the arrival of US forces and the loss of its leader, Major Ramsey, the ECLGA assimilated into the US Sixth Army for the conclusion of the Luzon campaign. The ECLGA supported the US forces' campaign in Luzon, but did not have the impact of other Luzon guerilla groups after the arrival of US forces in Luzon.

The nucleus of the ECLGA was two US Army officers from the 26th US Cavalry, Captain Joe Barker and Lieutenant Edwin Ramsey. After the successful landings in Lingayen Gulf by Japanese forces in 1942, the Japanese forces quickly moved south into the central plains of Luzon. The advance of Japanese forces south cut off many US and Philippine Army units. When the US forces in the Philippines fell back and made their final defense on Bataan, Barker and Ramsey avoided capture in northern Luzon and remained behind enemy lines. Barker and Ramsey both decided to continue the fight against Japanese forces together. MacArthur's message after his escape to Australia, "I shall return," was essential to the success of guerilla efforts against the Japanese and crucial in maintaining the support of the Filipino people.⁹⁹ Barker and Ramsey received this message in radio dispatches from the SWPA and relayed it to the Filipino people. The confidence of the Filipino people in the US resolve to liberate the Philippines fueled the guerilla movement in Luzon.

Barker and Ramsey first learned of an American-led organized resistance movement at a camp, run by Bill and Martin Fassoth, for US civilians and soldiers in northern Luzon. The Fassoths were US expatriates who ran a large plantation that provided shelter for displaced US

⁹⁹ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 77.

civilians and soldiers in Luzon.¹⁰⁰ The Fassoth camp provided sanctuary for many American guerillas after the US forces' surrender, but ceased operations after Japanese forces captured Bill and Martin Fassoth. While at the Fassoth camp, Barker and Ramsey learned that Colonel Claude Thorp had established a guerilla organization in Luzon with a headquarters located on Mount Pinatubo. They decide to head north to link up and join Thorp's organization. MacArthur directed Thorp to conduct guerilla operations against the Japanese forces before the surrender of US forces on Corregidor.¹⁰¹ After they reached Thorp's camp, Thorp dispatched Barker and Ramsey to build a guerilla force in east central Luzon with Barker as the commander and Ramsey as his deputy.¹⁰² They began building a guerilla organization in central Luzon with their headquarters at Timbo.

Barker and Ramsey focused their organization on building a network of intelligence and support personnel. They devoted their time to generating guerilla forces, organizing them, and gathering intelligence on the Japanese forces. Heavily influenced by Mao Zedong's book on guerilla warfare, Ramsey chose to delay attacks on Japanese forces until the guerilla movement was strong and the Japanese forces were weak. Ramsey had received a copy from the communist Hukbalaps in Luzon.¹⁰³

In October 1942, Japanese forces captured Thorp, and in January 1943, they captured Barker.¹⁰⁴ Japanese forces captured Thorp in a raid on his guerilla camp and they seized Barker as

¹⁰⁰ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 97.

¹⁰¹ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 14.

¹⁰² Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 111.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁰⁴ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 145, 151.

he traveled to Manila. Japanese forces executed them both while in captivity. Ramsey assumed command of the ECLGA and he focused on evading the Japanese counter-guerilla efforts. He used Filipino agents in Manila, such as Fausto Alberto and Alejandro Santos, a newspaper reporter, to relay information through couriers. Alberto and Santos built an intelligence network of Filipino civilian officials in Manila, close to the epicenter of the Japanese occupation authority.¹⁰⁵ Ramsey also used Mona Snyder, a Filipina socialite in Manila, as an intelligence agent and link to Manuel Roxas, the future Philippine president.¹⁰⁶ Roxas was the chief advisor to Jose Laurel, the president of the Philippine puppet government. Roxas covertly supported the Filipino resistance by providing information on the senior Japanese officials in Manila.¹⁰⁷ Ramsey used this information to protect his organization, and when able, relayed it to the SWPA. He avoided Japanese raids on guerilla camps and survived the intense Japanese counter-guerilla campaign that ended the lives of many early guerilla leaders. Despite the pressure from Japanese forces, Ramsey received growing support from the Filipino populace. Local leaders and mayors of towns such as Bagac and Morong volunteered to join the ECLGA forces as fighters and intelligence agents.¹⁰⁸

The increased local support bolstered the growth of the ECLGA forces. By 1944, the ECLGA consisted of more than 10,000 personnel organized into military districts of Pangasian, Tarlac, Pampanga, Bulacan, and Bataan.¹⁰⁹ Ramsey developed a sizeable guerilla force in central

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 180-181.

¹⁰⁷ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 57-58.

¹⁰⁸ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 149.

¹⁰⁹ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 151, 177.

Luzon capable of intelligence and sabotage operations. Meanwhile, the ECLGA stood as a living symbol of US resolve to liberate the Filipino people from Japanese occupation.

Ramsey built the ECLGA, but he needed direct communication with SWPA to support the US effort to liberate Luzon. The opportunity came in 1944 as Ramsey received a radio from Captain Timothy Casey, an Allied Intelligence Bureau agent, via submarine delivery.¹¹⁰ Once the ECLGA established contact with SWPA, it began relaying information on Japanese forces in Luzon. Ramsey answered SWPA requests for information on size, strength, and readiness of the ECLGA.¹¹¹ As MacArthur prepared to make the case for an invasion of the Philippines, he believed the use of guerilla forces would save US soldiers' lives.¹¹² The development of combined American/Filipino guerilla forces in the Philippines was an important part of MacArthur's plan for the liberation of the Philippines. Ramsey's ECLGA forces supported MacArthur's plan by relaying intelligence on Japanese forces and maintaining Filipino support for the eventual US forces' liberation of Luzon.

As US conventional forces moved closer to the Philippines in late 1944, Ramsey relayed information that General Yamashita's Japanese forces planned to defend in Luzon, not Leyte to the south. Ramsey informed SWPA that Yamashita would form a defensive line in northern Luzon and mostly abandon the central plains.¹¹³ Additional reports from other guerilla leaders, such as Volckmann with the USAFIP-NL, corroborated Ramsey's reports at SWPA. The overlapping nature of guerilla reporting from the various groups on Luzon allowed the SWPA to

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 243.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 250.

¹¹² MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 197-198.

¹¹³ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 285, 288.

vet their reports and strengthened the intelligence they received.¹¹⁴ On the eve of the US landings at Lingayen Gulf, the ECLGA began offensive operations to destroy Japanese wire communications, railroad tracks, supply convoys, and vehicles.¹¹⁵ The ECLGA guerillas attacked small elements of Japanese forces and guided US forces as they moved south toward Manila. ECLGA forces drove out the remaining 600 Japanese soldiers in the fishponds region outside Manila.¹¹⁶ They guided the US 37th Infantry Division into Manila.

Shortly after the arrival of US forces at Lingayen Gulf, the US Sixth Army processed the ECLGA forces into the US Sixth Army. Ramsey succumbed to the stress and cumulative physical and mental effects of almost three years as a hunted guerilla leader. He suffered two nervous breakdowns and returned to the United States for recovery and rehabilitation.¹¹⁷ The Sixth US Army assimilated the ECLGA guerillas into their ranks and, without a prominent leader, the ECLGA did not make as great of an impact on the final campaign to break Yamashita's defense in northern Luzon. Before he departed, Ramsey received personal thanks from MacArthur for his efforts and MacArthur recognized the critical role his guerillas played in keeping Filipino hopes of US liberation alive.¹¹⁸ Ramsey received the Distinguished Service Cross, presented by MacArthur, for his actions during the Japanese occupation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Willoughby and Chamberlain, *MacArthur: 1941-1945*, 215.

¹¹⁵ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 301.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 304, 323.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 323, 329.

¹¹⁸ Willoughby and Chamberlain, *MacArthur: 1941-1945*, 231.

¹¹⁹ Ramsey and Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, 320.

While the ECLGA forces assisted US conventional military forces in the initial entry at Lingayen Gulf and the drive to Manila, they were not an independent supporting effort in the US campaign in Luzon to break the Japanese defenses. The ECLGA forces fostered continued support for a US liberation of Luzon within the Filipino populace. Their actions preserved Filipino confidence in the return of US forces to Luzon. Filipino support for the US liberation made the defense of Luzon an even greater challenge for Japanese forces. The ECLGA forces provided intelligence to the SWPA that was critical to the US liberation of the Philippines, especially in the central Luzon region near Manila.

Conclusion

American-led guerilla organizations in Luzon supported the US liberation of Luzon from Japanese forces in 1945. Throughout the occupation, Japanese forces captured many guerilla leaders and hindered the resistance effort in Luzon. Despite these efforts, the surviving guerilla groups, specifically the LGAF, USAFIP-NL, and ECLGA forces, grew substantially and contributed greatly to the US liberation of Luzon and defeat of Japanese forces. They provided critical intelligence on the occupying Japanese forces and their defenses in Luzon. As an enduring symbol of resistance to the Japanese occupation, these guerilla forces retained the confidence of the Filipino people in the eventual liberation of the Philippines by US forces. The confidence of the Filipino people in a US victory over the Japanese forces sustained Filipino support for the guerillas and US conventional forces. It also created more problems for the Japanese forces. The guerilla groups in Luzon increased their offensive operations as the US Sixth Army landed in Lingayen Gulf; attacking Japanese convoys, destroying supply depots, and wreaking havoc in Japanese rear areas. As US forces began offensive operations to break the Japanese defensive lines in northern Luzon, the guerillas fought alongside US Army units as provisional battalions, regiments, and a division, providing additional combat power.

The development of guerilla groups as a way to gather intelligence for SWPA operations was part of the plan for the liberation of Luzon, even before the US forces' surrender at Corregidor.¹²⁰ MacArthur believed the guerilla movement was a critical element of a US victory in the Philippines.¹²¹ The intelligence provided by guerilla groups supported SWPA planning and operations in Luzon.¹²² The LGAF provided battle damage assessments of US military bombing raids and tracked the status of US prisoners of war in camps across Luzon. They delivered a thorough survey of potential landing sites and Japanese defenses on the west coast of Luzon. The LGAF reports informed the SWPA decision to land on the south end of Lingayen Gulf. The USFIP-NL also supported the decision to land at Lingayen and correctly advised the SWPA of the limited Japanese defenses on the beach. They informed the SWPA that Yamashita did not intend to oppose US forces on the beaches.¹²³ Upon the US forces landing at Lingayen Gulf, Volckmann provided them with extensive sketches of Japanese defenses in northern Luzon. The ECLGA forces apprised the SWPA of Japanese operations in central Luzon and in Manila, including a link to the Filipino occupation government there. Without the intelligence apparatus of the guerilla groups in Luzon, the SWPA would have had a significantly degraded picture of the operational environment and Japanese forces.

The guerilla groups in Luzon had a psychological effect that supported the US campaign to liberate the Philippines. As the guerilla groups gained strength, they reinforced the growing support from the Filipino populace. The inability of the Japanese forces to rid Luzon of the

¹²⁰ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 11.

¹²¹ Breuer, *MacArthur's Undercover War: Spies, Saboteurs, Guerillas, and Secret Missions*, 48.

¹²² Willoughby and Chamberlain, *MacArthur: 1941-1945*, 209.

¹²³ John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (New York: The Modern Library, 1970), 630.

guerilla groups increased the Filipino confidence in the US liberation of the Philippines. If Japanese forces were unable to destroy the struggling resistance movement in Luzon, they surely would be unable to defend against a massive invasion by US forces. The US-led guerillas were a visible symbol of the US commitment to the Philippines. They maintained the support of the general populace for US forces from the occupation on through the campaign to liberate Luzon. The hostile Filipino populace, bolstered by the guerillas, was another challenge the Japanese forces were unable to overcome in the defense of the island.

When the US forces landed at Lingayen Gulf, they caught Japanese defenders in a battle between US forces along the coast and guerilla forces in Japanese rear areas across Luzon. The SWPA unleashed the guerilla groups on Japanese forces in the days preceding the US forces landing in Lingayen Gulf. Volckmann's USAFIP-NL struck Japanese outposts and interdicted their lines of communications throughout northern Luzon. Yamashita was unable to reposition portions of his army to his defensive line in northern Luzon due to USAFIP-NL operations. The LGAF destroyed Japanese supply depots and disrupted the movement of Japanese forces to the north. The coordinated effects of guerilla operations in the Japanese rear areas around the US forces' landing at Lingayen Gulf degraded the Japanese forces' ability to reinforce any delaying action inland and disrupted their preparations for a defense in northern Luzon.

As US forces consolidated for their final drive against Yamashita's defenses in northern Luzon, US military commanders employed guerilla units as conventional units within their formations. Guerillas units transitioned into provisional battalions, regiments, and even a division. They fought under US Army units, such as the US Sixth Army and I Corps. The LGAF became a Philippine regiment and fought under the US 32nd Infantry Division. The LGAF played a critical role in the 6th Ranger Battalion's raid on the Cabanatuan POW camp, rescuing 513 US

prisoners.¹²⁴ After capturing critical infrastructure, including towns at key road intersections and airfields across northern Luzon, the USAFIP-NL fought as a light infantry division under the US I Corps and Sixth Division. They secured the Bessang Pass at a great cost and captured Bontoc, one of the three major components of Yamashita's defense in northern Luzon.¹²⁵ The US-led guerilla groups in Luzon directly support US operations to break the Japanese defenses in Luzon. The combat power they provided helped US forces defeat the Japanese.

The buildup and employment of guerilla forces in Luzon was a coordinated effort by SWPA to support the successful liberation of the Philippines. The Japanese forces knew they would face significant resistance from guerillas in the Philippines early in the occupation. However, their effect on Japanese forces far surpassed General Yamashita's expectations once the guerillas began offensive operations as US forces approached Luzon.¹²⁶ The success of the American-led guerilla groups in Luzon highlighted the disproportional effect a guerilla force can have on an occupying force in relation to the limited resources applied to that guerilla force. With the support of a committed populace and in coordination with conventional forces, the employment of guerilla forces can effectively support a major campaign throughout all phases, from preparation of the battlefield to decisive combat operations. The American-led guerilla groups in Luzon supported the US campaign to liberate the Philippines throughout all phases of the campaign.

The American-led guerillas in the Philippines, and Luzon more specifically, provided a starting point for the development of unconventional warfare capabilities within US Army

¹²⁴ Lapham and Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerillas in the Philippines 1942-1945*, 180.

¹²⁵ Robert R. Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1963), 556.

¹²⁶ Aubry S. Kenworthy, *The Tiger of Malaya: The Story of General Tomoyuki Yamashita and "Death March" General Masaharu Homma* (New York: Exposition Press, 1953), 20-21.

Special Forces. After World War II, Colonels Russell Volckmann and Donald Blackburn developed the doctrine and organization for Special Forces that remain today. The success of the American-led guerillas on Luzon proved the value of unconventional warfare with guerillas. The employment of guerilla organizations within conventional Army formations during major combat operations provided an early example of successful Special Operations Forces and Conventional Forces integration. The integration of unconventional and conventional forces was critical to the successful liberation of Luzon during the Philippines campaign and remains so for future conflicts.

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